

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method of accessing interactive content as part of an interactive television system, the method comprising:
assigning a synthetic channel to correspond to at least one interactive content element available as interactive programming content via the interactive television system;
communicating the interactive programming content, including the interactive content element and the corresponding synthetic channel, to a viewer via an electronic programming guide; and
providing for selection of the synthetic channel corresponding to the interactive content element from the electronic programming guide ~~via a user-actuateable device~~ to access the interactive content element.
2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein selection of the synthetic channel is by entry of a channel number on a remote control ~~the user-actuateable device comprises a remote control having a plurality of numbered actuateable buttons.~~
3. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the interactive content element comprises a computer-implemented user application.

4. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the interactive content element comprises a content page maintained at a network storage location.
5. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein the user application comprises an e-mail service.
6. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein the user-application comprises an event calendar.
7. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein the user-application comprises a photo album.
8. (original) The method of claim 4 wherein the content page comprises a page corresponding to an Internet site.
9. (original) The method of claim 4 wherein the content page comprises a page designated by a user via a unique address.
10. (original) The method of claim 4 wherein the content page comprises a page maintained on a local server.

11. (original) A method of accessing interactive content as part of an interactive television viewing environment, the method comprising:

displaying an electronic programming guide including accessible broadcast channels and accessible synthetic channels on a video display device for the interactive television viewing environment;

receiving a viewer's selection of a synthetic channel by way of the displayed electronic programming guide;

correlating the selected synthetic channel to an interactive content element available by way of the interactive television viewing environment;

retrieving the interactive content element from at least one remote location;

and

displaying the interactive content element on the video display device for the interactive television viewing environment.

12. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein selection of the synthetic channel includes actuation of at least one button on a remote control device.

13. (original) The method of claim 12 wherein selection of the synthetic channel includes selection of the synthetic channel directly from the electronic programming guide.

14. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein correlating the selected synthetic channel to an interactive content element is accomplished via a controller executing a computer-implemented application.

15. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein the at least one remote location comprises a database maintained at a broadcast center;
and wherein retrieving the interactive content element includes sending an uplink signal to the broadcast center, the uplink signal comprising a request for the interactive content element, and receiving a downlink signal from the broadcast center, the downlink signal comprising the interactive content element.

16. (original) The method of claim 15 wherein the uplink signal and the downlink signal comprise communications encoded in a data over cable service interface specification protocol.

17. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein retrieving the interactive content element from at least one remote location comprises accessing the interactive content element that is broadcast from a broadcast center using a carousel technique.

18. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein the video display device comprises a television.

19. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein the interactive content element comprises a computer-implemented user application.

20. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein the interactive content element comprises a content page maintained on a server at the remote location.

21. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein the interactive content element comprises a system page.

22. (original) An interactive television network environment, comprising:

a television set;

a client terminal having a network interface configured to transmit and receive encoded communication signals, the client terminal being capable of being connected to the television set; and

a broadcast center, the broadcast center capable of communication with the client terminal; and

wherein the broadcast center is configured to transmit an electronic programming guide to the client terminal, the electronic programming guide including:

a listing of channels, the channels comprising cable channels and synthetic channels; and

identification of programming content corresponding to each channel;

and

wherein the client terminal is further configured:

to receive a command from a viewer to select a channel from the electronic programming guide, wherein the selected channel comprises a synthetic channel;

to transmit an uplink signal to the broadcast center requesting the programming content corresponding to the selected synthetic channel;

to receive a downlink signal from the broadcast center, the downlink signal comprising the programming content; and

to transmit the programming content to the television set for display.

23. (original) The interactive television network environment of claim 22, further comprising a remote control device, the remote control device configured to transmit the command to select a channel from the electronic programming guide.

24. (original) The interactive television network environment of claim 22 wherein the synthetic channels comprise functional channels, content channels, or system channels.

25. (original) The interactive television network environment of claim 24 wherein the functional channels correspond to interactive programming content, including applications that are executed on behalf of the viewer.

26. (original) The interactive television network environment of claim 24 wherein the content channels correspond to interactive programming content, including content pages maintained at a network storage location.

27. (original) The interactive television network environment of claim 24 wherein the system channels correspond to interactive programming content, including system pages that allow the viewer to administer a viewing environment via the client terminal.

28. (original) An electronic programming guide, comprising:
a channel field, the channel field including a listing of available cable channels and available synthetic channels; and
a content field, the content field including a current programming schedule corresponding to each available cable channel, and an interactive content element corresponding to each available synthetic-channel.

29. (original) The electronic programming guide of claim 28 wherein the synthetic channels comprise functional channels, content channels, or system channels.

30. (original) The electronic programming guide of claim 28 wherein the interactive content element comprises a computer-implemented user application.

31. (original) The electronic programming guide of claim 28 wherein the interactive content element comprises a content page maintained at a network storage location.

32. (original) The electronic programming guide of claim 31 wherein the content page comprises a home page corresponding to an Internet site.

33. (original) The electronic programming guide of claim 31 wherein the content page comprises a page other than a home page corresponding to an Internet site.

34. (original) The electronic programming guide of claim 31 wherein the content page comprises a page designated by a user via a unique address.

35. (original) An article of manufacture, comprising:
a computer-readable medium containing a set of instructions to:
transmit an electronic programming guide from a broadcast center to a client terminal, the electronic programming guide comprising:

a channel field, the channel field including a list of available cable channels and available synthetic channels; and

a content field, the content field including a current programming schedule corresponding to each available cable channel, and an interactive content element corresponding to each available synthetic channel;

receive an uplink signal from the client terminal, the signal comprising a request for an interactive content element;
retrieve the interactive content element from a memory storage device; and
transmit a downlink signal to the client terminal, the downlink signal comprising the interactive content element.

36. (original) The article of manufacture of claim 35 wherein the interactive content element comprises a computer-implemented user application.

37. (original) The article of manufacture of claim 35 wherein the interactive content element comprises a content page maintained at a network storage location, including a server.

Claims 38 and 39 (canceled).

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